

6.

International Lessons

6.1 Common Traits

Common traits in cities that have been successful in implementing long term growth strategies include:

- sustained commitment to a coherent plan over periods exceeding electoral cycles
- strong and often charismatic leadership and quality urban governance
- ability to unlock access to significant resources
- an emphasis on catalytic investments in public infrastructure that unlocks opportunity and economic competitiveness and
- established institutions capable of implementing bold and often complex initiatives.

Successful cities, according to current evidence, offer competitive advantages in the following important arenas:

a | Successful Cities Address the Needs of the Poor

A city that works for the poor, works for all. Deliberately dealing with poverty in an urbanised setting holds obvious advantages for the poor in getting access to services and opportunities. Due to economies of scale, governments are also increasingly more able to service the poor better in cities than in rural areas. The socio-political consequences of not addressing the needs of the urban poor are perhaps even a greater motivation for action.

Yet, the ability of cities to address the conditions of poverty depends on urbanisation being combined with economic growth. Achieving sustained economic growth is therefore a precondition for sustained improvements in the lives of people. Sedibeng faces a strategic choice on how to deal with the needs of the poor – there is a tension between investment in subsidised basic services and productive investments in

the urban economy.

b | Successful Cities Provide High Quality Living Experiences

Successful cities provide high quality living experiences in which people want to settle and invest. A city that works for the poor cannot be a city with a poor living environment. A high quality environment is a reflection of the range of economic opportunities, cultural experiences, sense of safety and a quality physical environment. The availability of a range of effective and efficiently provided public services, transport and amenities are important factors in creating a high quality living experience. A key intervention most commonly utilised in smaller city strategies is to position for lifestyle investment and the creative class, both being dependent on good living experiences and urban quality.

c | Successful Cities are Home to Healthy, Tolerant and Dynamic Communities

Successful cities are home to healthy, tolerant and dynamic communities in which diverse groups can forge a common identity.

d | Successful Cities are Well-connected

Connectivity relates to availability of quality communications infrastructure, mass transit systems and excellent regional and international transport connections. Connectivity is a pre-requisite in establishing a foothold in trade and financial flows within a region and global context. Public investments in transport and communications infrastructure are key factors influencing competitiveness. A key strategic consideration in focussing on connectivity, relates to the challenge faced by small cities to remain relevant in the national spatial economy.

e | Successful Cities Provide Agglomeration Benefits.

Increasing size generates agglomeration advantages since it stimulates a growing range of economic activity. Competitive agglomeration benefits are influenced by dispensable income, the cost of public services, transport, labour and other input costs, as well as the appropriateness of the labour skills to economic requirements. Where cities are unable to maintain a critical mass of economic activity, it can



experience a quick loss of business and jobs. While agglomeration benefits are important to ensure growth the inverse is also true; inability to maintain agglomeration benefits can result in rapid decline.

f | Successful Cities Care about the Environment and Sustainability

Successful cities care about the environment and sustainability, and manage its environmental impact carefully as economic success increasingly becomes linked to environmental quality.

g | Successful cities Invest in People

From ECD, through school education, to adult education and skills development in the workplace, successful cities invest in people.

h | Types of Projects

At the project level several cities are employing similar tactical measures to achieve growth and development – mostly involving transformational projects. Some of the common initiatives employed by cities include:

- Waterfronts (including inland water bodies i.e. Centurion and rivers);
- Convention centres;
- Industrial development zones;
- Iconic architecture and civic buildings;
- Revitalising and increasing public transport including bus rapid transit and rail links;
- Place marketing and branding;
- Promoting and supporting competitive economic clusters;
- Promoting low entry level sectors such as tourism;
- Hosting major events (2010 Soccer World Cup) and annual festivals;
- Addressing safety and security issues;
- Incentivising new economy firm location such as aircraft manufacturing, nano-technology, silicon chip; bio-technology, information technology and call centres;
- Providing quality urban environment and amenities;
- Emphasising culture and a society of tolerance and openness;
- Revitalising urban centres or defined precincts;

- Looking at alternative, more sustainable sources of energy; and
- Investing significantly in human resource development and research and innovation